

## Fearless Charles McCabe

# 'Goonybird' Draws Blue Law Legislation

One notes with interest that a Boston legislator is trying to fix it so a spectator directing abusive language toward a participant in a sporting event would be subject to a \$50 fine.

This valiant effort to take the fun out of sport comes from deep in the heart of the blue law country.

A blue law is some officious john's idea of what is good for everybody else, made into a writ.

In times past in New England it has been deemed illegal for a woman to kiss her child on the Sabbath, or for anyone save an authorized clergyman to cross a river on the same day, or to play any musical instrument except drums, trumpet and jewsharp, or make minced pice.

This latest blue law sponsor said he took his action because an unnamed baseball player "became so incensed at the continued stream of abuse and filthy words directed at him he attacked his tormenters."

The reference is obvious—to Washington outfielder Jim Piersall, who used to play for Boston. He has a widely publicized history of mental illness, and spent time in a violent ward of a mental hospital in 1952.

He practices golf swings in center field, hides coyly behind the flagpole, and gets in constant fights with umpires. The fans call him "Nutsy" and "Gooney-Bird" and less printable things.

This season Piersall charged into the stands in Baltimore after a heckler. The pair never came to blows, though Piersall was charged with disorderly conduct.

It's a pity our Boston friend based his high principles on so fragile a vessel as Jimmy Piersall. Piersall is partly a sick man and partly a cunning man who trades on his sickness and his even greater reputation for it.

That he does all this with the pleased connivance of his employers does not enhance the sacred name of baseball.

Piersall indulges in antics that would be grounds for ejection in any other player. He seems to get away with it because of some official belief that the baseball fan visits a ball game for the same reason English society toured the asylum at Bedlam in the Eighteenth Century—to observe lunatic behavior.

The validity of Piersall's indignation against the Baltimore fan, who said no more than what he has been hearing for years from other fans, can perhaps be judged in the light of what American League umpire Nestor Chylak said recently:

"Piersall was thrown out of 12 games last year, and 11 of those times the game was on national television."

Piersall is a weak case, to be sure, but there are

other reasons to deplore any attempt to temper the more violent verbal brickbats thrown at athletes.

It's one of the axioms of show business that the price of a pasteboard includes the right to boo like hell, if the spirit moves. And in case you haven't been let in on the secret, professional sport is a part of show biz.

There's no law forcing a man to play games for money. Equally there's no law—as yet—against conveying to a player under certain circumstances that his performance stinks.

Mr. Harry Truman put it well and true when he said, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen."

Abusive language, I suggest, is the birthright of the American when he is watching sports. And a good thing too. Else our kitchens and living rooms would be hotbeds of domestic apartness, the air blue with epithet and exhortation.

If Jimmy Piersall performs any social good at all, it results from his just being OUT THERE in the outfield, a handy target for us inhibited ones. But don't hang sumptuary laws on him because he's underprivileged or something. Please.

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RUGGED ACTION . . . Members of the Long Beach semi-professional hockey team, practice for coming tournament which will be held at the new Olympic Ice Arena at 23707 S. Western in Torrance. The tourney, round-robin style, will pit teams from Long Beach, Bakersfield, and Burbank.

On Thursday, Long Beach and Burbank tangle, while on Nov. 29, a Monday, Bakersfield and Burbank occupy the rink. Following all of the hockey games, the management of the ice arena has scheduled skating for 55 cents.

## Drag King Tops Field

National Drag champ Jack Chrisman tops a strong field of entries on Saturday at Lions Drag Strip in Long Beach.

Challenging Chrisman will be Ken Stafford and Steve Porter, who have both chalked up wins in recent weeks. However, because of his national performance, Chrisman is given a slight edge.

In the gas eliminator event, Tom McEwan, the winningest driver of the year, will be out to add another top eliminator title to his record.

McEwan will have his work cut out for him when he faces world record holder John Peters. Peters has won six out of his last 10 starts.

Time trials begin at 2:30 p.m. with final eliminations getting under way at 7:30 p.m.

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## A. J. Foyt Top Pilot At Ascot

A. J. Foyt, hard charging Houston, Tex., race driver and 1961 Indianapolis winner, will be aiming for his third straight victory when he leads an all-star field in the 22nd Thanksgiving 150-lap midget car Grand Prix at Ascot Park Thursday night.

If the two-time national driving champion pulls off the hat-trick he'll break all records for the traditional holiday classic started in 1934 at old Gilmore Stadium in Hollywood.

No driver has ever won three of the 110 Offy marathons, let alone three in succession.

ONLY TWO drivers have won twice in a row, Ronnie Householder in 1936-37, and the late Roy Rusing in 1940-41. The late Bob Swanson (1934, 1938) and Perry Grimm (1946, 1949) were other double, though interrupted, victors.

INDIANAPOLIS flavor will run deep with the likes of Parnell Jones of Torrance, Jim Hurtubise of Lennox, Roger McCluskey of Tucson, Jimmy Davies of Monticello, Ind., Norm Hall of Hollywood and other '500' vets in a field of more than 50.

Four of the drivers entered have competed on all three Grand Prix tracks — Gilmore Stadium, Gardena Stadium (now Western Speedway) and Ascot Park — 54-year-old Joe Garson of Eagle Rock, Cantrell, Allen Heath of Northridge and Johnnie Tolon of Norwalk.

ASCOT RACING director J. C. Agajanian took over the historic race after Gilmore Stadium gave way to a television center.

Twenty-four fastest drivers from qualifying trials at 6:30 p.m. will be flagged off in Thursday night's 150-lapper. There also will be a three-lap trophy sprint between the four fastest and a 15-lap semi-main.

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